

NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AWARD PROGRESS REPORT

PROJECT TITLE: Testing a Fixed Gear Resource Survey Method for Inshore Areas.

CONTRACT NUMBER: PZ06134

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

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MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND MILESTONES:

1. Conduct background research.

The principal investigator conducted background research in support of anticipated project activities. This included collecting information on fyke net design and construction techniques, gear capture process, methods and applications of the use of this gear in other geographic locations.

2. Draft subcontract for gear construction and vessel charter.

The principal investigator drafted a contract agreement that will allow project partner Larry Knapp to construct the experimental fyke net to be tested. Under the agreement, Knapp's vessel, the F/V Lady Esther, will be used to set and retrieve the gear on a minimum of eight (8) separate occasions and Knapp will also participate in sampling the catch.

3. Conduct project planning meeting.

The principal investigator and project partner Larry Knapp met with Consortium Director Chris Glass in June 2006 to discuss fyke net design and capture process, potential sampling site

locations, regulatory permitting considerations, and potential use and applications of data collected. Dr. Glass has prior experience using fyke nets and generously agreed to discuss these experiences with project participants.

UNEXPECTED DIFFICULTIES & PROJECT ALTERATIONS:

1. Gear construction and field sampling rescheduled.

Originally, project partners had hoped to construct the experimental fyke net to be tested in this experiment during the winter of 2005/2006, and to conduct field testing of the gear in the spring and fall of 2006. However, due to a lengthy review process at the NMFS, project partners did not receive the contract to complete this work until June 2006. Project partner Larry Knapp, an inshore lobsterman, did not have time to build the fyke net during the busy summer lobster season in time for field testing in the fall of 2006. Thus, it is necessary to reschedule gear construction for the winter of 2006/2007 and field testing for spring and fall of 2007.

NEXT STEPS:

Over the next six months, project tasks will be focused on the following objectives:

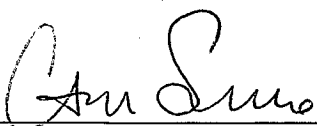
1. Refining fyke net gear design.
2. Purchasing materials and constructing experimental fyke net gear.
3. Conducting four (4) days of field testing in May 2007.

IMPACTS TO FISHING & SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITIES:

This project aims to address the need for better fine-scale information on resource status in inshore areas identified by the scientific community, with a focus on the inshore waters of mid-coast Maine. While the establishment of the ME/NH Inshore Trawl Survey certainly provides an abundance of information towards this goal, the use of otter trawl gear as a survey technique has certain inherent limitations. For one, this method is not particularly effective in complex rocky habitat with substantial vertical structure. In addition, the presence of lobster traps and other fixed gears often limit the number and location of sampling stations for the trawl survey. These weaknesses introduce considerable, although unavoidable, bias into the survey. This study will explore the potential for using fyke nets as a supplementary resource survey method for inshore areas. This study will also help identify species and/or population components for which the trawl survey does not seem to be capturing representative samples.

The fishing community will undoubtedly benefit from the development and evaluation of alternate resource assessment techniques. Improved resource assessment methods will ultimately lead to more accurate and reliable population abundance and distribution estimates. This will provide better information on which fishermen and fishing communities can base business and management decisions.

SUBMITTED BY:



Catherine Salerno, Principal Investigator

27 NOVEMBER 2006
Date